THE LEGEND OF THE HOLY GRAIL

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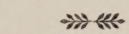

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Written by a distinguished art critic — Sylvester Baxter — who obtained his data from Edwin Austin Abbey

The Legend of the Holy Grail

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The Legend of
The Holy Grail

as set forth in the frieze painted by Edwin A. Abbey for the Boston Public Library. With description and interpretation by Sylvester Baxter

BOSTON
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GALAHAD'S ATTAINMENT

as related by Sir Percivale
in Tennyson's *Holy Grail*

'When the hermit made an end,
In silver armour suddenly Galahad shone
Before us, and against the chapel door
Laid lance, and enter'd, and we knelt in prayer.
And there the hermit slaked my burning thirst,
And at the sacring of the mass I saw
The holy elements alone; but he,
"Saw ye no more? I, Galahad, saw the Grail,
The Holy Grail, descend upon the shrine:
I saw the fiery face as of a child
That smote itself into the bread, and went;
And hither am I come; and never yet
Hath what thy sister taught me first to see,
This Holy Thing, fail'd from my side, nor come
Cover'd, but moving with me night and day,
Fainter by day, but always in the night
Blood-red, and sliding down the blacken'd marsh
Blood-red, and on the naked mountain top
Blood-red, and in the sleeping mere below
Blood-red. And in the strength of this I rode,
Shattering all evil customs everywhere,

And past thro' Pagan realms, and made them mine,
And clash'd with Pagan hordes, and bore them
down,
And broke thro' all, and in the strength of this
Come victor. But my time is hard at hand,
And hence I go; and one will crown me king
Far in the spiritual city; and come thou, too,
For thou shalt see the vision when I go."

'While thus he spake, his eye, dwelling on mine,
Drew me, with power upon me, till I grew
One with him, to believe as he believed.
Then, when the day began to wane, we went.

'There rose a hill that none but man could climb,
Scarr'd with a hundred wintry water-courses —
Storm at the top, and when we gain'd it, storm
Round us and death; for every moment glanced
His silver arms and gloom'd: so quick and thick
The lightnings here and there to left and right
Struck, till the dry old trunks about us, dead,
Yea, rotten with a hundred years of death,
Sprang into fire: and at the base we found
On either hand, as far as eye could see,
A great black swamp and of an evil smell,
Part black, part whiten'd with the bones of men,
Not to be crost, save that some ancient king
Had built a way, where, link'd with many a bridge,
A thousand piers ran into the great Sea.

And Galahad fled along them bridge by bridge,
And every bridge as quickly as he crost
Sprang into fire and vanish'd, tho' I yearn'd
To follow; and thrice above him all the heavens
Open'd and blazed with thunder such as seem'd
Shoutings of all the sons of God: and first
At once I saw him far on the great Sea,
In silver-shining armour starry-clear;
And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung
Clothed in white samite or a luminous cloud.
And with exceeding swiftness ran the boat,
If boat it were — I saw not whence it came.
And when the heavens open'd and blazed again
Roaring, I saw him like a silver star —
And had he set the sail, or had the boat
Become a living creature clad with wings?
And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung
Redder than any rose, a joy to me,
For now I knew the veil had been withdrawn.
Then in a moment when they blazed again
Opening, I saw the least of little stars
Down on the waste, and straight beyond the star
I saw the spiritual city and all her spires
And gateways in a glory like one pearl —
No larger, tho' the goal of all the saints —
Strike from the sea; and from the star there shot
A rose-red sparkle to the city, and there
Dwelt, and I knew it was the Holy Grail,
Which never eyes on earth again shall see.

The Legend of the Holy Grail

I.

THE THEME IN ITS RELATION TO THE PLACE.

A PRIME consideration in estimating a work of art is that of appropriateness to occasion. This applies with particular force to a work of decorative character. An easel picture or a piece of sculpture, created solely with reference to itself,— that is, simply to express the idea that the artist had in mind when he wrought it,— is to be judged solely by itself. Should it not be in keeping with its environment it may be

removed to surroundings that agree with it. But a decorative work must take shape with reference to its environment. By its very nature it is a part of that which lies about it and into which it enters as an element. Its function is not only to adorn, but to interpret, to elucidate, and therewith to complete, as foliage and efflorescence complete a tree. For this reason decorative art, in its higher aspects, is the greatest form of depictive art. By its unification with its environment it has not alone the individual character conferred by its own attributes. Its own character is amplified and enriched by the nature of that to which it belongs and which correspondingly belongs to it. While it is subordinative in lending itself to the embellishment of something

greater than itself, it is likewise exaltative in enhancing the quality of the greater work. The quality of the latter enters into the decorative work, informing it with attributes beyond itself. When we think of Athens, we see the Acropolis; the Acropolis means Athens and the sum of Hellenic culture. St. Paul's and Westminster likewise mean London and they incorporate with themselves visions of the stupendous sweep of England's history.

With such thoughts in mind we may ask ourselves why it was that the legend of the Holy Grail was chosen as the subject for the decoration of that particular part of the great Library, which stands as a visible expression of the mind and soul of Boston. The artist, it seems,

first had another subject in contemplation, and the idea of the Holy Grail grew into his mind and possessed itself of him in consequence of his researches in relation to the theme first suggested. His original purpose was to depict in a series of symbolistic panels "The Sources of Modern Literature," just as Mr. Sargent had chosen "The Sources of the Christian Religion" for his theme. While investigating the subject and searching for material, Mr. Abbey became more and more impressed with the legend of the Holy Grail as offering a motive peculiarly adapted to his ends. This legend appears to have inspired the oldest aspects of literary expression in the period of European literary development that succeeded the classic. It

impressed itself deeply upon the literature of France, of Germany, and of England, and in English literature its associations went back to the Celtic period. Not only does it take a high place among the sources of modern letters, but it is so rich in imaginative material that its motives have inspired much of the best of English poetry in the nineteenth century.

Another advantage of the legend was the fact that it was practically virgin ground for the artist. No other painter or illustrator,—at least in any work of note,—had made use of the rich material which it afforded. Mr. Abbey was therefore the first to choose the story of the Grail as the inspiration for an important decorative work.

The circumstance, however, which most of all made The Quest of the Holy Grail supremely appropriate to the occasion, not only for a decoration of the Library, but of this very part of the Library, is one that perhaps may not consciously have appealed either to the architect or the painter. It often chances that in a work of imaginative art,— a work with the quality that makes it the art of the painter as well as the art of the poet,— a high attribute may be conferred without conscious volition. What seems to be chance may lead to some extraordinarily felicitous end. So it happens that in the great poem we inevitably read between the lines and penetrate for ourselves into the wonderful realm of mind and spirit wherein the poet roamed.

And there we share the treasures whose beauty and whose worth he strove to set forth by clothing in words a few of the myriad thoughts that thrilled his being. If not some of the same ideas that perforce he left unuttered, then what we there find, when we follow his lead into the mystical regions where his soul is at home, are at least of their kin. And in thinking these thoughts while the minstrel sweeps his harp-strings, the lurking tones that, imagined only, are heard by our inner ear alone, make the listener receptively also a poet, if not a singer, while under the spell.

The Holy Grail is the symbol of spiritual enlightenment: the wisdom that guides men to shape their lives to right ends, that their souls may grow towards perfection, and that

those thus directed may guide their fellows in the same path. This is the main function of human knowledge. If it does not train men for enlightenment, the pursuit of it is a vanity of vanities. It leads to evil. Selfishly employed, the fruits of knowledge poison the understanding and debase the soul.

That this is the aim and the end of the knowledge which comes from learning is a truth that finds eloquent expression throughout the beautiful Library building. The noble legend carved upon the frieze, so that all who run may read, proclaims:

> The Commonwealth Requires the Education of the People as the Safeguard of Order and Liberty.

But unless education means enlight-

enment, it cannot serve that end. Above the entrance the seal of the Library declares enlightenment, "Lux Omnium Civium," while the two beautiful boys that support the shield bear the kindled torches of learning. At the head of the grand staircase the supreme talent of Puvis de Chavannes depicts "The Muses acclaiming the Genius of Enlightenment," while on the surrounding walls are represented the various sources of the learning that the Muses foster and that lead to enlightenment as their supreme fruition. Finally, in the Delivery Room, the place where the people of the city receive their books from this their great storehouse of the world's accumulated lore, the exalted end implied in the pursuit of knowledge by the soul

that hungers and thirsts for it as naturally as the body hungers and thirsts for meat and drink, is fittingly symbolized in the theme selected so finely that it seems to have selected itself, as it were, precisely for the mural decoration of this very portion of the Library. "The Quest of the Holy Grail" signifies the quest for spiritual enlightenment as pursued through life by the righteous soul of man,—the Grail, as we have seen, being the symbol for illumination of the soul through the wisdom that comes with the right use of knowledge. Hence nothing could be more appropriate, nothing could set a loftier standard for them that thirst for learning, than this sacred legend set forth in this place. By the very nature of man this quest must under-

lie every activity that makes for the growth of the human soul.

The manner of approach to the Delivery Room, in its enhancement of the sensuous effect produced upon the beholder when entering the place, enhances also the spiritual impression of the work. The spirit of the Library as a whole finds expression in the decorations of the staircase: "The Genius of Enlightenment" and the various aspects of science and letters that underlie its development. There is an intensity of contrast in the passage from the elemental grandeur, serene and contemplative, of the Puvis de Chavannes decorations to the splendor of this room, wherein all parts unite in a rich harmony, orchestrally full-toned and brilliant: the dark walls

of carved and panelled oak, the superb ceiling with its refined elaboration, and between them the pictured glory of the splendid frieze.

This intensity of contrast is in perfect keeping with the conditions. The effect is that of transition, not culmination. In the staircase decorations we have a generalization of the subject. The simplicity of treatment, the static calm, the strength in repose, accord with the pagan spirit of the conception,— pagan in the sense of being wholly natural of aspect. The phases of mental and spiritual growth are dealt with as something elemental, primordial,— as evolution necessarily must be.

The change is from the abstract to the concrete. The very subject, the quest for enlightenment, implies

activity, something dynamic, and a corresponding intensity in the development of the motif. With these qualities splendor is consistent; and its employment accords with the fact that the design of the room, being so different from that of the other parts of the Library, calls for a treatment likewise radically different. The room is the vestibule of the administrative department of the Library; therefore an abrupt transition in architectural and decorative motives is in keeping with this circumstance.

While the character of the room is essentially that of the Renaissance, in common with the building as a whole, it is stamped with that aspect of the Renaissance which in its derivations is more distinctively mediæval and is correspondingly akin to

the Gothic spirit, while the other aspects are of the classic. Hence we have the spirit of classic Paganism informing the architecture of the edifice as a whole, while in this particular part thereof the spirit of Christianity predominates. Very fittingly, therefore, the concrete setting forth of the quest for enlightenment, as here symbolized, takes a Christian legend for its theme in a way that typifies the Church militant in the higher sense of the term, — the spirit that arouses divine enlightenment in man through the activities which energize his best potentialities. The mediæval nature of the subject, together with these other considerations, not only justify but demand a brilliant treatment,— a work that shall be as

pictorial, and even as spectacular, as the artist's imagination may invent within the limitations set by the requirements, by no means rigid, that belong to decorative painting. Mr. Abbey's fertile fancy, his exceptional coloristic endowment, his whole course of training and development, seem to have peculiarly qualified him for a task wherein his great possibilities as a decorative painter first found adequate expression.

II.

THE LEGEND IN LITERATURE.

JUST what was the Holy Grail? The word, it should be said, comes from the Old French "greel," a contraction of the Liturgical Latin "gradale" or "graduale," primarily a book of offices in the Roman Catholic Church, and in its obsolete significance a broad, open dish or cup, also a chalice. The modern poetic employment of the legend has re-established the word, in the latter significance, in an enduring place in our language.

The Holy Grail was fabled to be the vessel made sacred by the circumstance that our Lord and Saviour

used it in dispensing wine at the Last Supper. The story runs that it came into the possession of Pontius Pilate in some way, and from him it was purchased by Joseph of Arimathea, who, after the Crucifixion, gathered therein the divine blood from the Saviour's wounds. Another derivation, ascribed in legends of the Middle Ages, is that it was the platter on which the Paschal lamb was served at the last Passover observed by Jesus. Yet another account relates that it was brought down from heaven by angels and committed to the keeping of a body of knights, who guarded it on the top of a lofty mountain. According to the legend, the cup, if approached by any but a person perfectly pure and holy, would be borne

away and vanish from sight. This account of the marvellous vessel led to the Quest of the Holy Grail, which was to be sought for on every side by a knight who was perfectly chaste in word, thought, and act. The derivation of the term Sangreal, for Holy Grail, from "sanguis realis," real blood, through the circumstance of its legendary office and the transubstantiation of the wine that it held into the actual blood of Christ, plausible as it appears, is now held by practically all competent authorities to be without any real justification.

In a brief account of the first part of the decorations, written when they were shown in London, Mr. Henry James wrote of the Grail: "Its existence, its preservation, its miracu-

lous virtues and properties, were a cherished popular belief in the early ages of European Christianity; and in the folk-tales from which the twelfth-century narrators drew their material it was represented as guarded for ages in the Castle of the Grail by the descendants of the 'rich man' to whom the body of Jesus had been surrendered, where it awaited the coming of the perfect knight, who alone should be worthy to have knowledge of it. This perfect knight is introduced to us in the romances of the Arthurian cycle, so largely devoted to the adventures of the various candidates for this most exalted of rewards. Incomparable were the properties of the Grail; the enjoyment of a revelation of which conveyed, among many privi-

leges, the ability to live and to cause others to live indefinitely without food, as well as the achievement of universal knowledge and of invulnerability in battle. This revelation was the proof and recompense of the highest knightly purity, the perfection constituting its possessor the type of the knightly character, so that the highest conceivable emprise for the companions of the Round Table was to attain to such a consecration,— to cause the transcendent vessel to be made manifest to them."

The legend of the Grail had probably long been a fruitful theme for the folk-lore of the earlier centuries of the Christian era before its formal incorporation in literary shape took place. How far back the legend

goes cannot be said. Perhaps it had been gradually shaping itself since the early days of the Church. A tradition exists that the story was set down by a hermit in Wales in the eighth century; but nothing in Gaelic literature, so far as known, has survived to support it. The tradition may have arisen from the circumstance that when the scenes of the legend were laid in England the period was naturally set back in the remote past, which would bring it into the earlier days of the Church under the Celtic era of Great Britain. The first appearance of the legend in literary shape was, singularly enough, in the work of three Norman-French authors at the end of the twelfth century. These were Chrestien de Troyes, Robert de

Borron, and Walter Mapes, each in a great measure working independently. The story of the Grail, begun by Chrestien de Troyes, was continued by Gautier de Doulens, Manessier, and Gerbert de Montreauil, who thus amassed an imposing epic of 60,000 lines. Walter Mapes, or Map, was Archdeacon of Oxford under Henry II., and is said to have translated the legend from the Latin into Norman-French.

The Grail romance gave to old German literature one of its greatest monuments in the Parzival of the famous Minnesinger, Wolfram von Eschenbach. This work, which inspired the Parsifal of Richard Wagner, appears to have been derived very largely from that of Chrestien de Troyes. The Minnesinger, how-

ever, claims to have drawn his material from a poem by Kiot, a Provençal troubadour, who is said to have been inspired by a Moorish poet, Flegetanis of Toledo. No record to support Wolfram's claim has been preserved, but it seems not at all unlikely that his attribution is correct.

The first notable appearance of the legend in English literature is in Le Morte Darthur, by Sir Thomas Malory, in which the story of the Grail occupies five books, but is led up to by much that comes before. It was not until the nineteenth century that the legend again appealed strongly to poets; and then there were not a few who, first and last, were fascinated by its wealth of imaginative material. Of these renderings

the work of Tennyson, of course, is by far the greatest. In Parsifal Wagner has embodied to a great extent his own religious philosophy, uniting with Christian mysticism the Buddhistic principles that had inclined him strongly to the idea of a great music-drama based on the career of the divine teacher of the East. In the old romances, Perceval, or Parzival, is the hero, as Percivale also is in Tennyson's work, though the saintly Galahad, of purity unblemished, is a great figure. In Wagner's sacred festival play his Parsifal, the "pure fool," as the name signifies, is of the Galahad type,— the spotless youth who, with his lack of contact with evil, is correspondingly ignorant of the ways of men.

III.

THE ARTIST AND HIS INTERPRETATION.

IN his depiction of the Quest Mr. Abbey might more easily, perhaps, have followed the work of some one author,— say that of Sir Thomas Malory, as the first English source, or that of Tennyson, as the most famous. But he has very wisely chosen to make his interpretation eclectic. He has taken moments, situations and characters from this version and from that, and has blended, fused, or differentiated them according to the demands of his art, just as the poets each and all took similar privileges in their

dealings with the material at command. The artist has therefore made his frieze a work of higher significance by adopting this procedure, since it stands for the legend in its totality. Mr. Abbey's conception has its inspiration in the great body of literature that the legend from first to last now stands for. Therefore we have manifold aspects of the wonderful story here represented in visual guise. Indeed, in this, the first decorative presentation of the theme, we have a work that gives expression to the Grail legend as a whole, as embodied in the various interpretations, from the first to the last of the numerous versions.

The theme is set forth upon the walls of the handsome room much in the way that a story is told. One

feels it narratively as well as pictorially. In the vivid splendor of its coloring and in the animate marshalling of figures, in the presentation of typical scenes and events, it makes its appeal to the beholder in ways similar to those whereby tapestried emblazonments, hung upon the walls of great halls not unlike this, appealed to companies of knights and ladies in the days when such adventures seemed to belong not so much to some fabled past, as to the very age whose scenes might lie just outside the walls, or, at the farthest, upon the thither side of the hills that lay blue upon the horizon.

It is, moreover, the soul of the legend of the Quest that here finds expression, the soul that has informed and permeated a literature which has

run its course through the centuries, — characterized by certain attributes that mark it in its entirety. The artist's manner is closely in sympathy with the mythical and the legendary spirit of the subject; and yet it has a modernity that, while held true to the ancient and mythical quality of the theme, brings its mysticism and its symbolism intimately into relation with modern thought.

The treatment adapted gives to the consecutive panels of the frieze the movement and progress of a stately pageant that illustrates the course of a drama whose action was a profound reality to those who, in the ancient days, sat and listened to its story in surroundings that, as already has been remarked, bore semblance to those where the tale is now so

nobly pictured. May not this presentation make the divine motive of the legend, for many of them that come to behold it, an object of reverence as earnest, an ideal to be pursued as courageously and persistently, as in the days when it was fabled to animate the knights of Arthur in their quest?

One of our best authorities upon decorative art, Mr. C. Howard Walker, the architect, and a master of design, has well summed up the quality of the frieze in these words: "The beauty of its composition and of its color, its perfect adequacy of expression, and the ability shown to weave many figures into a harmonious whole and not to leave them in isolated, disconnected groups,— an ability that few artists possess, and

which was hardly to be expected of the follower of any modern school of art; the adequacy of idea, likewise lacking in most recent work; and the delicacy of drawing and deliberate distrust of sensational technique, — all mark it as a very unusual and excellent example of mural decoration."

In the case of a work whose scenes lay practically in No Man's Land perhaps the artist well might have felt himself privileged to give his fancy free range and thereby save himself a deal of trouble by selecting at pleasure his costumes, his architecture, and his accessories in general from the abundant stores of such things easily at command on all sides, and in a way that might best suit his artistic purpose. The painters of the

Middle Ages and of the Renaissance very easily settled these questions either by depicting their subjects in environments supplied by their own vicinage and by the facts of their own day, or by a not remote past that differed little from their contemporary surroundings.

Mr. Abbey, however, felt that, mythical and legendary as his theme was, it should be interpreted by observing certain historical facts as strictly as though his work involved an absolutely historical subject. In this way the artist has achieved throughout the development of his theme a fine consistency that contributes very essentially to the sense of unity which the beholder feels. The latter, however, can never realize the infinite pains that have been taken to

secure this result, any more than the hearer of a masterly symphony can realize how the composer has worked to fashion his wonderful tissue of tone-shadings in order to produce just the impression sought. If it could all be set forth,— the ways and the means by which the artist's sense of exactitude has been satisfied by keeping faith with the facts of certain definite periods,— it might prove immensely interesting and instructive. As it is, probably by far the greater part of the pains thus so elaborately taken must ever remain ineffective for the beholder except in so far as expressed in the grand result by which the artist has orientated himself, so to speak, and has kept his work true to a certain chronological unity reflected in a finer artistic coherence.

In adopting the belongings of the Arthurian period as the basis of his work, Mr. Abbey obtained the advantage of a definite point of departure for his scheme, chronologically and historically. Although no beholder can fully appreciate the vast amount of research which the artist's studies have involved, Mr. Abbey himself must have taken immense satisfaction in his conscientious insistence upon historic fidelity even for a theme that in itself is not strictly historical. All possible authority that might relate to the subject, whether historical, legendary, architectural, or archæological, has been carefully consulted. The results find expression in a multiplicity of details that, wherever perceived in the nicety of their bearings, prove exceedingly interest-

ing and instructive. This fidelity to the sources of his material must have been of unspeakable service in assisting the artist to realize his ideals.

Every matter of costume, of ornament, of architectural detail, has been closely studied. To these ends no pains have been too great to be taken. For example, in his studies for the panel, "The Siege Perilous," when he came to paint the tiled floor of the great hall where the Knights of the Round Table assembled, Mr. Abbey had great difficulty in finding any work upon the art of the period which he aimed to represent in his picture. At last he heard that there were some ancient Celtic tiles in the great Germanic museum of Nuremberg. So he undertook a journey to that city expressly to see them. He

found exactly what he wanted, and quickly made the sketches for that portion of his work. Possibly no one would ever have known the difference, had he drawn upon his imagination for his design. But he has enjoyed the higher gratification of satisfying his own sense of artistic consistency. For him, at least, there would have always been an unpardonable blemish upon his work, had he introduced, say, Romanesque tiles from Italy where the subject required a Celtic pattern.

In this way Mr. Abbey has visited many parts of Europe in his search for the material that might help him towards correctness. In the second panel of the series the designing of the chapel offers a beautiful example of the artistic justification for an accurate

study of architectural character, and particularly of architectural detail, the representation of the crucifix having been suggested by one of the early forms in which the Saviour is depicted with a beardless and youthful face.

For his representations of costume, which are exceedingly diversified, Mr. Abbey consulted all the available authorities. In accordance with information thus gathered the studies were made from garments specially made for the purpose and worn by models selected with particular reference to the various figures. A typical instance is that of the bishop who appears in the court of Amfortas. The period represented in this great panel is supposed to be several centuries earlier in date than that in

which the knights of King Arthur undertook their quest; for the court had been leading an enchanted, dream-like existence ever since the spell had been cast upon the castle by the fall of the King. For this reason the costumes of the many characters are of a much greater antiquity. That of the Bishop, who stands near the extreme left, or to the right of Galahad, is the earliest on record in the history of the Church, the mitre being a sort of pointed hood of white cloth, much like a monk's cowl, from which, perhaps, it may have been derived. In the preceding panel, in which a bishop preaches to the knights as they are about to depart for the Quest, the costume is that of a much later period, though one still comparatively primitive; the mitre re-

mains a cap of cloth, but in shape it more nearly approaches the conventional form that it finally assumed.

Whatever the view that might be taken of the frieze as an example of mural decoration, the sympathetic beholder can hardly help being impressed with the completeness with which Mr. Abbey has identified himself with his subject; how delicately and how powerfully he responds to its imaginative character, its poetic significance, and how deeply he feels its profound mysticism. He has, therefore, made all his accumulated wealth of scholarly and technical resources but a vehicle for the adequate expression of the real meaning of the legend. In making Galahad its hero Mr. Abbey has united and blended in him the attributes sever-

ally ascribed to the different persons who form the central figure of the Quest, according to various versions of the legend. We therefore have a very beautiful composite in the hero that the artist gives us, formed from the several ideals presented by the various writers who have set forth the sacred legend. We have the Galahad of Tennyson and Malory advanced to supreme leadership, and combining the most essential traits of the Parzival of Wolfram, the Percivale of Tennyson, and particularly the Parsifal of Wagner, together with not a little that is distinctive in the characters and the adventures of others who stood eminent among the Round Table's Knights,— as Launcelot, Gawain, and Bors. In the Galahad that Mr. Abbey gives us we thus

have a sum of excellences,— the pure and perfect knight a composite personality, just as the great legend, in its pictorial and decorative representation, has itself, as we have seen, almost necessarily been made a composite, representing the essential quality and spirit of the legend as a whole, as it has stamped itself upon Christian literature rather than confining itself to any particular version of the legend. The career of the knight who here becomes the chief figure of the Quest may be said to symbolize the experiences of mankind in the pursuit of the noblest ideals,— the difficulties that beset the seeker, the temptations which he encounters, the results that he achieves, in the quest for their realization.

In the development of his theme

Mr. Abbey has been true to the spirit of the legend as a whole in the way that it has informed the long sequence of its literature. In the first place he has made his successive panels a splendid succession of pictorial narration that the eye delights in and follows purely from interest in the story that thus unfolds itself, just as listeners in the early days harked to the tale for the sake of the stir of heart and soul by the relation of high adventures. The old writers knew how to tell their tales simply, directly, and movingly; and Mr. Abbey here enters into their spirit, just as the architects entered into the mediæval spirit when they created the hall which he has decorated.

But the narrational sequence, the dramatic movement, led to something

finer and higher in qualities that the accretions of the ages have added to the frank directness, the pure simplicity, of the early manner,— qualities contributed by the advancement of thought, the achievements of science. So the work is modern in character as well as mediæval in spirit. As we have seen, its fidelity in things historical and archæological is something essentially modern. And while reproducing the soul of a past that primarily is fabled, mythical, and legendary, it likewise gives expression to the soul of the present in embodying the exalted meanings which it reads in the sacred truths that have been handed down for us. Hence the work is likewise true to the beautiful psychological utterances of Tennyson's Idyl and to the pro-

foundly mystical significances of Wagner's lofty conception.

The artist must have found it a very difficult task to condense into a very few typical scenes the spirit of the entire legend, with its enormous multiplicity of incident, of adventure, of dramatic situations, and its not infrequent moments of lofty significance. So many of these things appeal directly to an artist's soul that to choose one particular subject out of many that seemed to possess an equal interest, and even to be essentially typical of the legend, must have been something very hard to do. He has solved his problem with remarkable success. He had to be guided, not only by the relation of the separate subjects to the legend as a whole, but

by their availability for the special purpose of so presenting his theme as to give it the necessary decorative unity, to suggest just the tonality demanded, to lend themselves to a consistent scheme of chromatic notation, of accents and contrasts, of line and mass, and of rhythmic groupings. These requirements are fulfilled most admirably in the fifteen panels, large and small, of the frieze. For the moments of splendid blossoming and fruition other moments,— equally essential to the theme, but distinguished by restraint, by a holding of action in suspense, by a reserving of energy, — are likewise required to supply the necessary balancing of parts: acting as the checks, the foils, and the complementary functions in the scheme. Had the artist divided his frieze into so

many equal spaces and filled each space with a subject of equal importance, he would doubtless have lost one of the most essential qualities demanded for a work of the kind. He would have missed the dramatic development of his theme with its culminating moments, prepared for by other scenes that expressed the onward movement of the action.

To follow the course of the legend through these diverse depictions is, for the spectator, no easy matter under the circumstances of the place. But it is something extremely interesting to do. And perhaps,— since the decorative intent is so immediately served,— it is well that the task should not be without its difficulties for the beholder. A subject that has taken years of thought and work

on the part of the artist cannot well be taken into the comprehension in as many minutes. Those who have little time to give may, indeed, satisfy themselves with the consummate splendor of the total effect and the charm of salient parts. Others should find themselves generously repaid for hours and days of thought and study that they may give. Regular visitors to the Library might do exceeding well to follow out the work in all the meanings they may trace from day to day, while waiting for their books. The influence that the work thus exerts must be great.

From his use of a Celtic environment in these decorations it is manifest that the artist has chosen the setting for his subject that naturally has been given it in the English ver-

sions of the legend, as set down anciently by Malory, and in the Victorian age by Tennyson. Malory's narration doubtless followed a popular belief when it laid the scene of the legend and its high adventures in the land that then had long been England, but was a kingdom in Great Britain in the days of Arthur's reign. The Holy Grail, it was held, had been brought to Glastonbury by the saintly Joseph of Arimathea. Thence the divine powers in charge of it took the sacred vessel and installed it in a castle on a hill-top. This became known as the Castle of the Grail. The location of this castle was most mysterious. Probably it was likewise held to be somewhere in Britain. But the Continental versions of the legend fol-

lowed by Wagner in his Parsifal located the seat of the Grail somewhere on the Continent, in the Castle of Monsalvat. The knights intrusted with the guardianship of the Grail were obliged, by reason of their vows, to be invariably pure of thought as they were virgin and chaste in body. Their exalted office and their closeness to the Grail, however, did not free them from risk of imperilling their virtuous eminence.

At last Amfortas, the Fisher King, lineally descended from Joseph of Arimathea, became the head of the knights of the Grail. But Amfortas fell from his high estate. Under the influence of some evil enchantment he espoused the cause of unlawful love, taking up arms in its behalf.

Cursed for this act, he and his court were cast under a spell that was neither sleeping nor waking; and from this spell they could not be released until the coming of a knight pure in body and thought, as demanded for the office of a Keeper of the Grail. The coming of this knight would bring salvation to the sorrowful company, freeing them from their living death and making possible at last the true death for which they longed, admitting them, with sin atoned for, to the glories of the Kingdom. Meanwhile the Grail yet abode in the castle, but their eyes might no longer behold it. Somehow the tidings of these things went out into the world. It became known that Amfortas and his knights lay under the spell, and that the

Grail was unguarded, denied to their sight. So there began the Quest of the Grail. For many a high-souled youth it became an aim to live a life whereby, through virtuous doing and thinking, and a record of righteous deeds, he might penetrate to the enchanted castle, behold the Grail, and release its fallen guardians.

IV.

THE FRIEZE.

THE treasure of Divine Wisdom, even though once attained and possessed, is not thereby assured as an abiding good for him that gains it. It does not warrant its holder against temptation; the ampler knowledge that it bestows may even enhance a danger of subjection to the allurements of the adversary. Perpetual vigilance, continual right use of the powers that it bestows,—these are the terms demanded for its holding by men into whose charge it has been given. And the knowledge that the treasure exists and is attainable impels men to seek it. Thou-

sands may fail, may fight the good fight, and may lose it. Yet for them, also, the Quest is well. Their purposes have been set upon a lofty ideal; the light it has cast upon their way has kindled their souls, has fed their minds, and has strengthened their resolves. The holy radiance, in the measure that it comes to men from its divine source, enables them spiritually to live, and in turn to enable others so to live, without other food for their hunger of soul. The great allegory, thus interpreted, in meaning becomes clear.

The First Panel: The Infancy of Galahad.

The first panel of the series represents "The Infancy of Galahad."

In design, as well as in subject, it very appropriately marks the beginning of the history. With extreme simplicity, with most delicate purity, it expresses the beginning of an epic movement that is to proceed with ever-increasing momentum and complexity until, at the conclusion, we shall witness a return to a kindred simplicity that represents the unity of fruition, of completion, of fulfilment, as this picture may be said to stand for the germination, the inception, the prophecy, of the spiritual process in the hero's life.

It is an exquisite presentation of the vision of the child which comes in the heaven that lies about us in our infancy. The baby Galahad laughs in supreme delight when he sees the Sacred Emblem whose light

is thenceforth to illuminate his way all through life. He reaches up his tiny hands after it, as it is revealed to him by the Angel of the Grail, robed in white and celestially radiant. The very lovely young nun who holds the baby is not aware of the vision, but is somehow conscious of a great and holy happening.

The color-scheme of the picture is dominated by tones of white and blue, with strong accents of gold and of black. The angel has great wings and robes of white suffused with a soft bluish gray; in the garments of the beautiful nun the creamy white of the drapery harmonizes finely with the bluish black. The Grail held by the angel is veiled with red samite, and above it hovers a white dove, a golden censer, lightly smoking, swing-

ing from its beak,— the dove symbolizing the Holy Spirit that informs the Grail. The Angel of the Grail is also supported by the strength of the Holy Spirit, the wings of white doves showing beneath the hem of her garment. The background is a simple plane that emphasizes the simple decorative quality of the picture,— a tapestry of bluish tone embroidered in gold, with figures of lions and peacocks between horizontal stripes of a Celtic pattern, also in gold. In Christian symbolism the peacock often stands for the glorified soul,— hence for the Resurrection, or the change from life to immortality. It is notable that the Lion also symbolizes the Resurrection, as well as strength. In Buddhism the peacock signifies longevity, and the lion

means strength of purpose, steadfastness for the right. The light from the Grail glows intensely upon the face of the angel and against her sheltering wings.

The baby hero, to whom we are thus introduced, has an origin variously attributed in different versions of the legend. According to Malory Galahad was the child of Launcelot and Elaine, daughter of King Pelles, and of the blood of Joseph of Arimathea. It had been prophesied that Elaine was to bear a child to Launcelot that was to grow into a great knight destined to achieve the Holy Grail. So Launcelot, by enchantment, was lured to Elaine, that the prophecy might be fulfilled. The white dove with the censer comes from Malory, who makes it fly

in at the window when Launcelot first visits King Pelles. Again, when Bors visited the king, and, beholding the baby in the arms of Elaine, recognized the likeness to Launcelot, the white dove came in, bearing a little censer of gold. Thereupon "there was all manner of meats and drinks," and "a savor as all the spicery in the world had been there." The censer here doubtless signifies the nourishing property of the Grail, — the breath of its incense the mystical sustenance upon which the child throve in body and in spirit.

The Second Panel: The Vigil of Galahad.

Galahad had been given into the keeping of a company of nuns when

an infant, that he might be trained in pure and holy ways. To their convent, in due time, Launcelot was summoned to receive him and make him a knight. He found the youth "passing fair and well made," and "saw him seemly and demure as a dove, with all manner of good features." The second panel represents the ending of Galahad's period of training,— the passing of his boyhood, with his entrance upon the active phase of his great career. He is about to leave his home with the nuns, and has passed the night's vigil in the convent chapel. Like the fourth panel, the second depicts a moment of breaking with the old and a preparation for a great event next to be pictured. Here it is an introduction to the culminating moment in the first stage of the drama.

Galahad kneels at the chapel altar, clad in a robe of red. Behind him kneel Sir Launcelot and Sir Bors, portentous in their chain armor. They fasten his spurs in signal that the moment of departure has arrived, with its beginning of life in the world. Galahad's helmet lies at his knees. The two candles at the altar have burned nearly to their sockets. At the distant windows in the upper left-hand corner the roseate light of dawn steals into the low and vaulted space. Behind Galahad and his comrades stands a company of white-robed nuns who hold great candles, the yellow glow upon their bearers' garments blending with the cool day-light that pours through the unseen window above the altar. The same light shows in gray reflections upon

the steely fronts and helmets of the two kneeling knights in armor. The yellow candlelight glitters upon their backs in fine contrast. The noble face of Launcelot shows in shadow, in grave meditation. That of Bors, beyond, is not seen.

The chapel architecture is Romanesque, of the early Christian type. In the centre of the background is the remarkable crucifix of early form, previously alluded to. It occupies the centre of three arches. The beautiful face of the Saviour, beardless and youthful, without a suggestion of the agony that marks later conceptions, but with a divine dignity, a calm that transcends physical anguish, has a strongly classic feeling. On either side of the cross is a kneeling figure; and three other figures,

vaguely indicated, are frescoed in each of the adjacent arches. In the vaulted ceiling above is a characteristic Celtic ornament of interlacing curves, red against gray.

The remarkable red robe of Galahad henceforth distinguishes the hero throughout the series. Besides supplying a magnificent accent for the central figure of each panel, the color has a deep mystical significance in this relation. In Christian symbolism red is the color of spiritual purity. It is the spirit cleansed as by fire. It is not the color of passive purity, of mere innocence, as white is. It stands for activity, conflict, human effort, with the knowledge of good and evil that imparts the strength to achieve the good and resist the evil. The red robe means the protecting

garment that the pure soul must wear for its life in the world. It identifies its wearer, through kinship of the same red blood, with the interests and the welfare of his fellows, in whose cause he is fighting. It is the outer personality which must bear the stress of the conflict and receive the bruises and stains that come from contact with the world. But beneath all the soul must remain unsullied.

The Third Panel: Galahad and the Siege Perilous.

The third panel, depicting Galahad and the Siege Perilous, forms the most splendid representation of the entire series. It displays a great dramatic moment, animate with a diversity of emotions. The magnifi-

cent spectacle invests the supreme interest of a supernatural event with the gorgeous array of a royal court.

Galahad has been schooled in worldly wisdom by Gurnemanz, and the youth now arrives at Camelot to take his place at the Round Table within the grand hall where sits King Arthur with his knights. He is led by the mysterious figure of his ancestor, the first possessor of the Grail after its consecration by the blood of the Saviour, Joseph of Arimathea. It is the spirit of Joseph, robed entirely in white, his head concealed. It is an awe-inspiring moment. Various emotions thrill the company,—awe, terror, curiosity, reverence, exultation. Sword-hilts, lifted high on every side, give the sign of the cross and portend the conflicts that are to

be waged in its sacred cause. King Arthur, enthroned beside the table beneath a rich baldachin, rises from his seat to receive the new knight and leader. Galahad advances with involuntary movement as though in the hands of destiny, all sense of self lost in his sense of the greatness of the moment.

Before him is the Siege Perilous, fashioned by Merlin with his magic, "carven with strange figures; and in and out the figures, like a serpent, ran a scroll of letters in a tongue no man could read." So related Percivale, in Tennyson's poem. "Perilous for good and ill," said Merlin; "for there no man could sit but he should lose himself." Merlin himself was lost, sitting in his own seat by misadvertence. Tennyson makes

Galahad say, hearing of Merlin's doom, "I, if I lose myself, I save myself." And so here we see the gentle, heroic youth lost to himself and saving himself for the noblest of ends. No better description could be given of the overpowering impression made by the mysterious figure of Joseph of Arimathea, advancing resistlessly, than is contained in the words of Mr. Henry Van Dyke: "The very sweep of the pale drapery is potent and majestic, like a visible call of destiny, and the form hidden by its folds has the dreadful force of the inscrutable."

As Galahad draws near, undaunted, but with the reluctance of humility, with the shyness of boyhood, a great angelic figure lifts the red drapery, of the same fabric as Galahad's mantle,

from the seat. Above the seat there appears written in the air with letters of golden light the magical inscription: "Cy yert li sieges Galaad." "This is Galahad's seat" is the meaning. The great white wings of the Angel of the Grail brood over the spot,—a spiritual canopy that converts the Siege Perilous into a throne that complements, and surpasses in glory, the throne of King Arthur adjacent.

An immense choir of adoring angels encircles the vast space of the hall, whose huge dimensions are indicated by the smallness of the figures of the knights seen in perspective on the thither side of the great round of the table. This angelic host is not visible to the company. Arrayed in close ranks, file above file, the angels

stand in the air just above the heads of the knights. The interlacing of their wings forms a pattern almost conventional in its repetition, enhancing the character of decorative design that the white splendor of the celestial visitors imparts to the magnificent painting. Intimate touches in the composition are those manifest in such a charming feature as that of the pretty page who kneels beside the king's place, looking up with happy face and inquiring eyes, and in the humorous suggestion of the panic-stricken look of the jester hard by.

Malory gives a circumstantial relation of the marvellous letters revealed upon the Siege Perilous. Perhaps Merlin's undecipherable legend declared itself in this inscription.

The king and his knights, coming to the hall for their feast, found upon the Siege Perilous, newly written in letters of gold, "Four hundred winters and fifty-four accomplished after the passion of our Lord Jesu Christ ought this siege to be fulfilled." It was the feast of Pentecost that they were celebrating; and Launcelot, accounting the term that passed, declared that it ought to be fulfilled that day. So they covered the siege with a cloth of silk until he should come that ought to achieve the adventure.

The stately architecture of the great hall, so splendidly pictured by Tennyson, in this picture is barely indicated by the gigantic pillars just seen on the left. Otherwise the angelic host conceals the walls, and

itself supplies the element of decorative magnificence. In this scene the red robe of Galahad is held by a girdle of golden brown,— evidently that plaited for the young hero as a sword-belt by the fair young nun, Percivale's sister, as related by Tennyson.

The Fourth Panel: The Benediction upon the Quest.

Malory tells how, during the feast, and before the coming of Galahad, news was brought of a marvel upon the river,— a great stone "hoving on the water," as it were of red marble, with a fair and a rich sword sticking therein. The king and his company hastened to see, but no one might move the sword.

When Galahad had come, the king took him to the river and showed him the sword. The youth lightly drew it from the stone and placed it in the empty scabbard that he wore, the sword fitting it exactly. After that most of the knights made vows to join in the Quest of the Grail. But Galahad rode yet without shield. On the evening of the fourth day he came to a white abbey. There behind the altar hung a wonderful white shield, bearing a red cross. This shield had belonged to King Evelake of Sarras, a Pagan converted by Joseph, the son of Joseph of Arimathea. Joseph and the king came together into the land of Great Britain. When Joseph lay dying, in token for the king he made a cross upon the shield with his blood,

predicting that it should be borne by Galahad, the last of his lineage, the cross ever remaining fresh as when painted. The shield was hung in the abbey to await there the coming of Galahad.

So with sword and shield sanctified by source and by destiny Galahad and his fellows from the Round Table congregate in the cathedral for benediction upon their Quest, as depicted in the fourth panel. It is a scene of solemn splendor. All the kneeling knights are in armor; and they hold their lances erect, gay with banners of manifold devices heraldic of their bearers. All wear helmets save Galahad, who kneels in the front rank. The new knight wears an armor of golden chain above his red robe. His left hand grasps his sword-

hilt, his right his lance; his banner bearing a red Celtic cross with lines of black. He kneels with bared head. Here also, as in the chapel with the nuns, his helmet lies before him on the ground. An impressive figure is that of the bishop, with arms extended in benediction. About the altar are many kneeling priests. In the background, beyond the bishop, is an iron grill finely wrought in a graceful pattern. Behind it is a suggestion of women figures, perhaps nuns, together with ladies of the court. The general tone of the panel is a warm brown, enriched by the varied colors that mark the pompous array of multicolored banners which adorn the thicket of lances. The picture forms a spectacle of quite another order from that of the dramatic

moment of the preceding subject. As already pointed out, it repeats the motive of preparation that marks the second panel and introduces the second great moment which brings the first half of the cycle to a close. The chords are fuller, richer, more complex, than in the first scene at the altar. At the same time the effect is more external, and not so profoundly impressive, as that of the quiet gathering in the convent chapel. Nevertheless, this seems quite appropriate as a prelude to a campaign of struggle, of conflict in the great world. In its difficult position, just above a window, the vivid and gorgeous character of the painting makes it hold its place with remarkable success.

The Fifth Panel: The Castle of the Grail and the Failure of Galahad.

The fifth panel, which occupies the entire frieze at the north end of the room, closes the first part of the cycle, which the artist has here divided much as Goethe divided his Faust into a first and second part. Here we behold the arrival of Galahad in the great hall of the enchanted Castle of the Grail. The environment betokens a period very much earlier than that of the other compositions. In various things we see that the age is more primitive. For instance, we may note the comparatively rude character of the canopy that shelters King Amfortas, as contrasted with the luxurious elaboration of King Arthur's baldachin.

The feeble old king, worn by suffering, tosses uneasily upon his couch in a sort of waking sleep. Upon the whole court, with its knights, its ladies, and its priests, the same dreamlike spell is evident in the way that the shadowy figures reveal themselves in the dim recesses of the castle. The coming of Galahad has brought a gleam of life to them all; one feels the thrill of hope, of expectancy concerning the promised, the long-awaited and blessed release that the coming of the pure young knight is to bring to the castle, his presence stirring the court as the earth is stirred at the break of dawn.

As befits the subject, the element of the mysterious, the symbolical, is here expressed with uncommon fulness and dramatic power. The ex-

alted conception, the solemn tone of the painting,— these grandly convey a sense of the enchanted, dreamlike existence to which the old king and his court are bound, and of the mystical pageantry of the guardianship of the Holy Grail.

In the midst of it all, vital and actual, stands the figure of Galahad, like a gleam of sunlight and a breath of pure air penetrating the realm of illusion, fresh from the world of reality. It symbolizes, perhaps, the extent to which human effort and intellectual endeavor may, unaided, enter into the mystery of existence and solve the secret of the divine — and the futility of the Quest as thus pursued; for, even though perceiving the illusion, the seeker is inevitably baffled in his search for what lies beyond.

To that end he must seek aid beyond himself, outside of his own individual powers. At the side of Galahad there hangs the polished steel shield of the old king, reflecting the red of the young knight's robe. One feels that the reflection means the illusion whose significance the confident young hero cannot penetrate. Beyond the sleeping king there passes the wonderful procession of the Grail that Amfortas and his court are inhibited from seeing while it moves among them. Galahad is endeavoring in his own mind to solve the meaning of it all. There is the Bearer of the Grail, there is the Damsel with the Golden Dish whose prototype is Herodias, there are the two Knights each with a seven-branched Candlestick, there is the Knight who holds aloft the Bleeding

Spear. It is ordained that Galahad shall ask the solving question, that he should demand the meaning of it all. Divine wisdom is not attained from one's own self alone: it must be sought of the experience and the knowledge possessed by others. Galahad deems his own schooling at the hands of the sagacious Gurnemanz sufficient. He can guess the mystery, he thinks. In consequence the achievement of the Grail is long deferred. Others, whom then he might at once have helped, are obliged to suffer long and much.

The figure of Galahad, arrived at his goal, yet baffled in his quest, is one of the artist's finest triumphs in characterization. It is wonderfully sympathetic, as it is unspeakably lovely, as a presentment of pure and

perfect youth. The stripling stands transfixed, with gaze mystified and yet lingeringly expectant, wondering at what lies about him, marvelling that the event he has confidently looked for does not happen, perplexed that the spell laid upon the shadowy throng about him is not broken, since the court palpably is touched by his presence, just as clouds begin to dissolve when the sunshine strives to break through. In contrast with Galahad's sunny brightness is the dreaming figure of the gaunt and spectral king. The hero is separated from his goal by scarcely an arm's length. His destiny is almost within his grasp. Yet he is fated to pursue the Quest through long and weary struggles.

The Sixth Panel: The Loathely Damsel.

As near disheartenment as one so filled with assurance of a high destiny well can be, Galahad finds himself roaming again. Somehow he has strangely lost the Castle of the Grail: the way thither is as uncertain as though his steps never had trodden it. He wanders through a blighted country that lies under the same spell as the castle. Enthralled by that spell are likewise the three maidens that pass as he sits disconsolate by the roadside, pondering his failure. A weirdly mystical group they are,—the Loathely Damsel and her two companions. In the sixth panel we see the hapless lady riding a white mule with a rich golden harness, her

hooded cloak of dark crimson concealing her head,— now bald and with repulsive features that once were of exceeding beauty. The dark of the crimson makes a minor tone in relation to the bright red of Galahad's robe as he sits with head bare and bowed. The second damsel follows riding, her head and shoulders just seen in the picture. The third maiden is dressed as a stripling in dark attire. She carries a scourge to urge the two steeds forward. The Loathely Maiden holds in her arms the ghastly head of a crowned king, and is weighted down with the burden. In the background are bare tree-trunks in a gloomy forest, the light of a bleak sky gleaming through. The Loathely Damsel has lost her charm of face,— though still retaining her

beautiful young form,—in penalty for the ill she has wrought. Against her will she has to roam the world, doing harm to men, until the achievement of the Grail shall set her free with her companions. They recognize Galahad; filled with resentment at his failure to effect their longed-for disenthralment, they bitterly reproach and revile him for not asking the question when within the castle. He bears in patient sorrow their maledictions, for he feels that they are justified.

What is the meaning of it all? Here in the Loathely Damsel we have a prototype of Kundry, so finely developed by Wagner's art, as in the preceding panel we see in Galahad something of the "Pure Fool," the Parsifal whose youthful innocence,

prime essential to the Quest though it be, yet is all unsufficing. Knowledge of the world's ways is needed, that the hero may redeem his fellow-beings from manifold sufferings and misfortunes. Just as Kundry was doomed to work ill to men sorely against her will until one should come destined to release her, so likewise was it with the Loathely Damsel. She stands for the ill that woman unwillingly works for man; she stands for the loss of woman's personal charm that comes with years passed in a world blighted by the loss of its source of life and light, the Divine Wisdom that is possible to mankind; she stands for the power of woman over men and their kingdoms, making crowns and the wearers of crowns her very own to do with as she may, their lives

with their kingdoms forfeit to her. And she takes them greedily, but with much sorrow. So, though merely an episode in the series, the subject of this panel is pregnant with deep significance.

It is notable that the Loathely Damsel retains her essential nobility of nature, typified in her beauty of figure, while suffering the inevitable penalty of her acts through her loss of charm in countenance. The strength of red blood has carried the soul of the pure knight safely through the occupancy of the Siege Perilous, — perilous through the dangers from pride taken in attributes and virtues conferred by God, not gained by himself. It has guarded him through fasts and vigils. It has carried him to the very abiding-place of the Grail

itself. But there something more than personal purity was demanded, something more than singleness of purpose. He was a seeker for enlightenment, and as such he was bound to ask a certain question. That is, wisdom can be gained only through understanding. So, meeting the Loathely Damsel, he sees the immense amount of harm that exists in the world and understands its cause. And she, in her helpless anger, gives him the key to the Quest. From her lips he learns for the first time that he should have made question, that therein lay the cause of his failure. When Galahad again comes to the Castle of the Grail, he will know what to do.

The Seventh Panel: The Conquest of the Seven Deadly Sins.

The next two panels are preliminary to the culmination of the sequence of high adventures through which Galahad had to pass before fulfilling his Quest. In bringing his hero to the enchanted castle of the Imprisoned Maidens and in the happenings pictured in the two panels precedent thereto, Mr. Abbey has followed the account given by Malory very closely, though with a sense of the poetic symbolism of the subjects that transcends immensely the somewhat matter-of-fact narrative of that writer. In the seventh panel we for a second time see Galahad in chain-armor worn over his robe of red, engaged in mortal combat with the seven knights

who guard the gate of the castle where the captive maidens are imprisoned. They are knights of darkness, for they impersonate the Seven Deadly Sins. Here, for the only time in the series, we see Galahad in positive aggressive action, depicted in a militant phase. At the outset of the Quest Galahad donned his chain-armor, ready for conflict, but upon his first path to the Castle of the Grail he seems to have had no occasion to wear it; without it he entered the enchanted hall. Hand-to-hand conflict with the world's evil is necessary to the growth of the youthful soul. Aided by the armor of righteousness, the pure knight overcomes the Seven Deadly Sins that menace the integrity of his soul, as they bar the gate to the castle where the Active

Virtues are imprisoned. Galahad here wears his golden helmet; and we see the red interior of his shield, strapped to his arm, while he wards off the blows of his adversaries. The seven knights of darkness are in scaly armor, grim and gray, and their shields are of steel. The seven knights are brothers, and Galahad tells them that he has come to destroy the wicked customs of the castle.

THE EIGHTH PANEL: THE RIGHTEOUS KEEPER OF THE CAPTIVE VIRTUES GIVES GALAHAD THE KEY TO THEIR PRISON.

Galahad defeats the seven knights, though they "all have ado with him at once"; and they turn and flee. The evil knights are not slain.

They flee to other parts. Sin has no further menace for the pure soul, but its embodiments survive to harass the world. The hero penetrates to the inner gate and is greeted by the keeper, an aged man in religious garb. The natural keeper of the human body is world-old Righteousness, who guards the inner gate; the Sins stand without.

The soul of intrepid virtue has learned to the depths the nature of evil, and has kept himself pure the mean while. With uncovered head, helmet held in his left hand and bared sword in his right, Galahad pays reverent homage to the holy man who greets him, and says, "Sir, have here the keys to this castle!" With these the young knight opens the gates and passes within.

The Ninth Panel: Galahad delivers the Captive Virtues.

By reason of its victory over evil the Pure Soul has penetrated to the depths of human nature wherein lies latent all its potentiality for good. Hence the imprisoned Virtues are set free to bless the world with their manifold activities. Such is the meaning of the ninth panel, in which the artist has made beautiful use of a great decorative opportunity. This panel is the pendant of "The Siege Perilous," which occupies the corresponding position on the opposite wall. When Galahad ventured to occupy the Siege Perilous, he thereby hazarded all the dangers through which he had safely passed when he entered the Castle of the Maidens.

Then the Pure Soul redeemed human nature from base mastery and made it the abode of righteousness, the source of light. This was the last great step by which the achievement of the Grail was assured.

The picture is a conception of exceeding graciousness,— replete with loveliness in form and feature, exquisite in its qualities of coloring; delicately luxuriant, and as gladsome to the eye as the sight of a spring-time garden after the bleakness of winter days. In most effective contrast with the austere walls of the huge dungeon where they have been held captive is the fair company of godly maidens in their flower-like diversity of array,— pale blue and lily white, rose, lilac, and brocade of golden weaving. The delivering

knight receives in all humbleness the shyly tendered thanks of the many maidens. His back is turned to the spectator, his helmet, sword and shield have been laid upon the ground. Upon the shield we see the cross painted by Joseph with his blood,— the same cross as that borne upon the banner of Galahad in the cathedral scene.

The Tenth Panel: Galahad parts from his Bride, Blanchefleur.

After releasing the captive Virtues, that they may beautify and bless the world with all manner of gladness that is born of godliness, Galahad marries the Lady Blanchefleur,— the White Flower of woman's purity that complements the soul of the true man. Blanchefleur, say some of the

legends, was a niece of Gurnemanz; and to her turned the heart of the boy ere he had come to sit in the Siege Perilous. In his journeyings he often thought of her. And after he had released the captive maidens he found Gurnemanz wounded and dying. His old teacher told him that he had failed to achieve the Grail because he had not wedded his true love. So Galahad promised to marry Blanchefleur. But on the morning of their wedding he had a vision of the Grail, and knew that none but a virgin knight might achieve it. So he turned away from his sweet wife, and went out upon the Quest.

The picture is the most pathetic in the series. The beautiful bride in her wedding attire sits crowned with

a wreath of roses, and in her lap she holds a cluster of the same flowers. Galahad turns away, perhaps not so unwillingly as it might seem, for a sense of the inevitable fills his soul, and the knowledge of his Quest and what it will bring can leave no room for earthly sorrows.

Viewed literally, as the legend may read, it is a tragic moment. But Galahad is not of a nature to wed and then meanly desert, breaking his troth almost at the foot of the altar that he may fulfil a higher purpose. The truer meaning of the holy story must be read into the picture. At the gate awaits a young knightly companion, holding the red-cross shield for Galahad to take and resume the Quest,— the shield that shall protect him throughout the

Quest, to the end of it. Blanchefleur, alive to the lofty purport of the moment, shows no resenting, deploring grief upon her lovely face. She knows what calls him away, she knows that spiritually she has been made one with him; and Galahad goes forth with the completed nature, woman joined with man, that is needful for the great attainment. The woman standing behind Blanchefleur, the man awaiting Galahad at the gate: Womanhood with Manhood thenceforth is united. Galahad learns the lesson of marriage, and acquires its loftiest meaning in a union of qualities far more precious to possess than any pleasures of the sense might be.

The Eleventh Panel: Amfortas Released by Galahad.

The earthly wisdom taught by Gurnemanz through the alchemy learned from more intimate converse with the same source, through union with the pure elements of human lore, has been transformed to divine illumination. So, with the strength generated from a knowledge of the Good and from a conquest of Evil, and with his nature rounded out with the full attributes of mankind, Galahad comes again to the Castle of the Grail. He sees once more the strange procession of the Sacred Mysteries. The Grail is borne before him with all the accompanying symbolization that was witnessed once before. Still, he does not understand the sig-

nificance of what he sees. No man may come into a new and unknown realm and perceive the purport of the strange things there wrought in terms all unfamiliar. But this time the bright boy knight knew that he did not know. "He only knows who knows he knoweth not," runs one of the oldest and wisest of sayings.

Yet sympathy is a key that unlocks the secret chambers where is stored the knowledge possessed by other men. It was one of the keys to the Castle of the Captive Virtues. With heart full of compassion for the suffering King, Galahad turns to Amfortas. Knowing that he must ask a question, involuntarily the words come to his lips: "What aileth thee, O King? And what mean these

things?" That was the final key,— the irresistible impulse to help, the irresistible desire to know the highest. The spell was broken. Light and life broke forth from the Grail, gleaming and glowing throughout the castle and all through the court that dwelt there. The King, the priests, the knights, the ladies, all moved at last in waking life, were nourished from the wondrous substance of the Grail, and were made whole. From the arch-keeper of the Holy Mysteries, the venerable Amfortas, now fully restored to his high office, the knowledge of the use of the Divine Wisdom that flowed from the Grail,— the vehicle that in the substance of things seen holds the knowledge of all things knowable,— was imparted to his destined successor, the knightly and

royal youth of the same exalted ancestry as himself, and the last of his line.

So we see Galahad bending in affection over the dying King, their right hands clasped, the eyes of Amfortas lifted to behold the vision of the Grail, seen again by him at last, bringing comfort and blessed release, while the Angel bears it away from the Castle that so long sheltered it, its light glowing through its red mantle and lighting as with sunshine the snowy spread of her wings.

The Twelfth Panel: Galahad departs from the Land.

Come once again to his goal, and this time in the light of the Grail, Galahad has emancipated his suffering fellows who lived with the divine

vessel and yet knew it not, nor received the light that shone from it. Yet the Grail itself is not achieved. Galahad is certain of that end, but still it lies much farther on. So he mounts his white charger and journeys forth upon the Quest for the inexhaustible glories of the Divine. The lifting of the spell from Amfortas and his court has likewise redeemed the entire land from the blight that lay upon it. The Loathely Damsel is once more made whole, restored to beauty and goodness; and peace with plenty abounds among the people. So in the twelfth panel we see Galahad surrounded by the thankful folk as, with banner flying from his lance he rides away upon his last great adventure. He rides towards the sea upon which he is

to fare. High in the background are a town and castle upon a hill. We may fancy that the lady in a lilac gown, kneeling with her back to us in the foreground, is she who was the Loathely Damsel.

The Thirteenth Panel: The Voyage to Sarras.

Sarras is now the port to which Galahad is bound, and it lies far away. Sarras is the city where King Evelake did rule before he came into Great Britain. Malory tells us that it lay in "the spiritual place." Probably by that he meant the Holy Land, for there was much talk of Saracens and Paynims. Sarras, by its sound, may have been the capital of the Saracens. A great city upon an island, doubtless in the

Mediterranean, as a legend has it. However that may have been, it was Sarras that for a while was to be the earthly seat of the Holy Grail. Thither embarked Galahad in King Solomon's ship, which most wonderfully had been built and preserved for this service. The voyage to Sarras, pictured in the thirteenth panel, is a strong conception of the subject. Solomon's ship very naturally symbolizes the wisdom needful to bear one to enlightenment. The frail bark glides in perfect safety across the stormy waves, under lowering clouds that spread darkly above a narrow streak of sunlit sky which brightens the wide horizon with promise of a prosperous ending for the voyage. The sail is ever spread to a favoring wind, for guiding the ship is

the Guardian of the Grail. The angel sits joyously serene in the bow; while she guards the Holy Treasure with tender solicitude, its power leads the vessel in security. The Grail casts its pure light upon Galahad and his two faithful companions, Percival and Bors, who have been privileged to accompany him. Galahad is in adoration, and only he preceives the source of the glory that is upon them all. They may never behold the Grail itself, yet their fidelity joins them with their pure-souled comrade in arms.

This ship, built by Solomon, was of wonderful history. It had been predicted to the wise old king that the last of his blood should be a man which shall be a maid, and as good a knight as Joshua. Solomon

had built a ship cunningly wrought in a marvellous manner. When the ship was made, Solomon waited to go on board; but because of miraculous letters written by an angel thereupon he durst not enter. As he drew aback, the ship was shoved into the sea and it sped away. How it was kept through all those many scores of years no man may say. But its destiny from the first was to bring Galahad to Sarras.

The Fourteenth Panel: The City of Sarras.

Tennyson, in his matchless picture of Galahad's last journey, shows him voyaging to "the spiritual city." But Sarras was not the New Jerusalem, for the "spiritual place" where Malory set it was manifestly, as we

have seen, the Holy Land. In the fourteenth panel we behold the last abiding-place of Galahad. The stately city lies along the water. Three ships are moored in its quiet port, and a great red wall encloses the mass of buildings pinnacled and with towers. The purely decorative character of the work is emphasized by the central feature,— Galahad's sword and shield hung at rest. The hero is at the end of his adventures, and his arms are laid by.

When they came to Sarras, the shield of Galahad was recognized by an old man who greeted them at the shore as that of King Evelake, who had ruled the realm in the olden days. Galahad and his companions were received as holy men, and by the power conferred by his purity

he made whole the maimed and he healed the sick. For this the three were thrown into prison by the wicked King who was ruling there. But in their dungeon the knights were fed by the marvellous power of the Holy Grail. At last the King fell ill. He sent for the three knights, and implored their mercy. This they freely gave. The King died, and by all the assent of the whole city Galahad was made king. So came he into his kingdom. He had made himself lord of his own soul, and all else was given unto him.

The Fifteenth Panel: The Golden Tree and the Achievement of the Grail.

Galahad reigned over Sarras for a

year. Then came the fulfilment of his supreme desire. While voyaging in the ship and kneeling in adoration of the Grail, Galahad prayed that, when he might ask it, he should pass out of this world. A voice made answer: "Galahad, thou shalt have thy request. And when thou asketh the death of thy body, thou shalt have it, and then shalt thou find the life of the soul."

The decorative simplicity of the final panel unites it most harmoniously with its neighbor, which begins the cycle of the frieze. Here we have the apotheosis of Galahad. The perfect knight at last fulfils his Quest. His saintly ancestor, Joseph of Arimathea, reappears to him, and, disclosing himself, therewith reveals the Holy Grail. Float-

ing in the air as it is about to vanish back into Heaven from its earthly place of keeping,— sacredly treasured at Sarras since it came with the ship, — for the first time the Grail is seen unveiled. But no man might look directly upon its glory and live. Galahad had builded to its last twig his wondrous Golden Tree, the symbol of his perfected works on earth. Naught more remained that he might do. So came the mighty moment when he should look upon the Grail itself. He made the great request: "Now, blessed Lord, would I not longer live, if it might please thee, Lord!" he prayed.

Galahad, all through his career, from outset to end, has worn the red cloak; for it has been necessary so long as he acquires knowledge,

even of things spiritual, through experience in the world. But now the garment of action is about to drop from his shoulders as he kneels to put off mortality and to take on immortality. The crown and the sceptre of his personal kingdom he has cast at his feet. The Holy Grail itself, the crown, the sceptre, and the mystical Golden Tree are brightly defined in low relief with gilding and metallic lustre, while a company of seven angels with crimson wings witnesses the high achievement. The just man has been made perfect. Galahad is one with God. Divine Wisdom is attained.

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